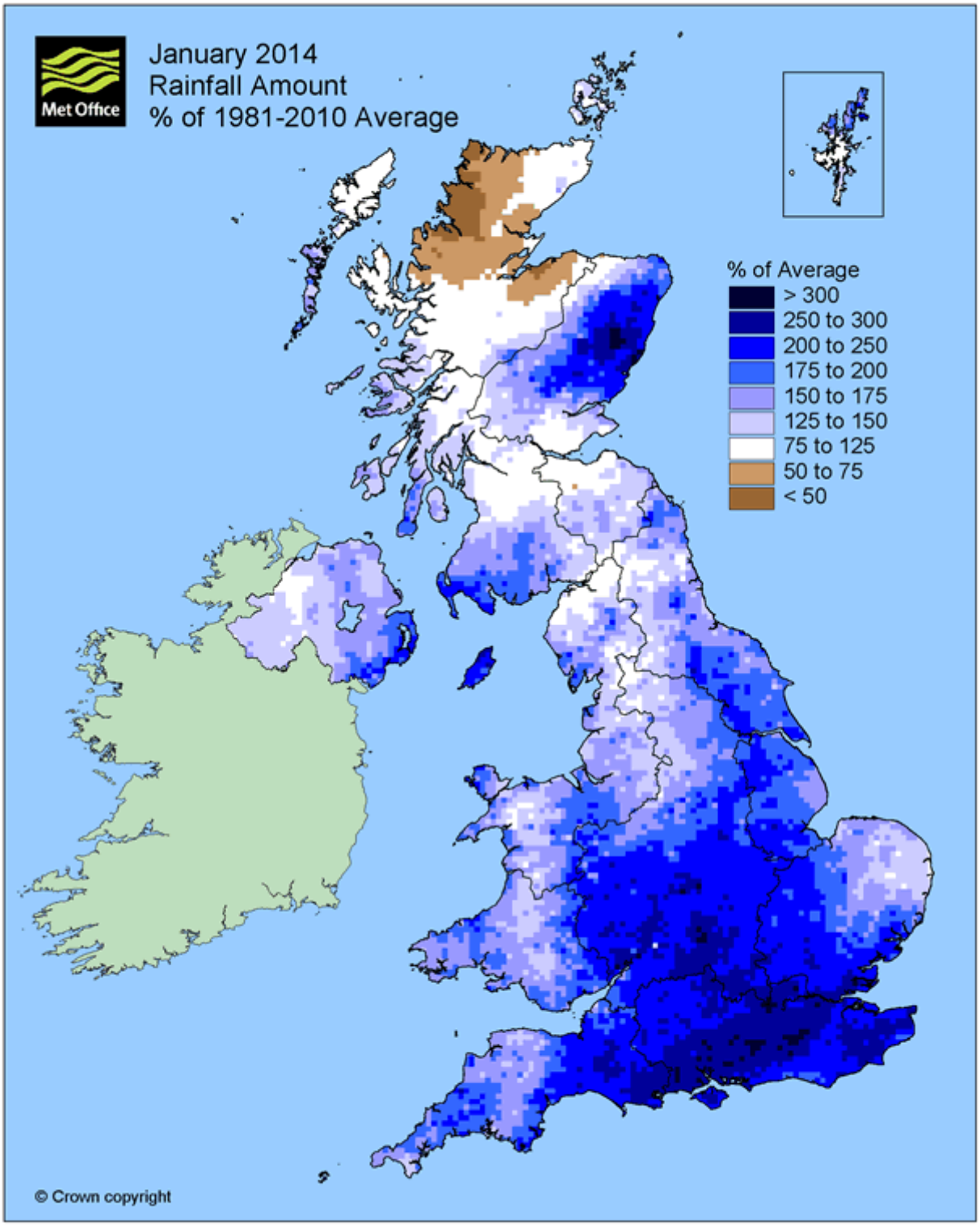
Met Office

January 2014

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

UK overview

January rainfall anomaly map:



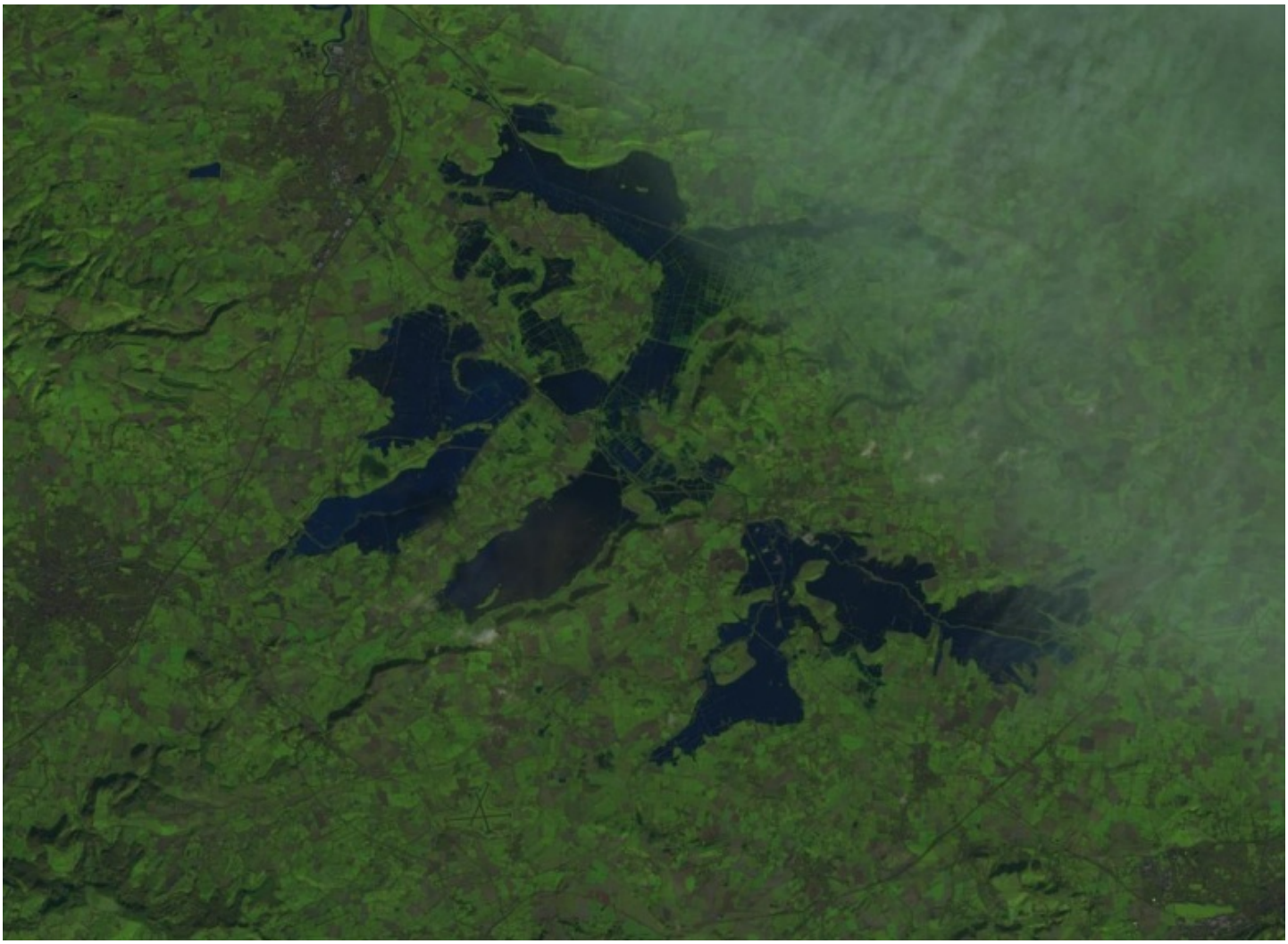
A succession of weather systems tracking across the UK from the Atlantic brought high winds, at times gale force, and persistent rain to the country. This extended a sequence of deep lows that began in mid-December. The worst of these were over by the 7th to give some brief respite, but rain continued through the remainder of the month with very few dry days. For the period from 12th December to the end of January some stations in the south of England had recorded over five months worth of rainfall. The dominance of the unsettled weather resulted in January being a very mild month with relatively few air frosts; any snowfalls were confined to the Scottish mountains.

The UK mean temperature was 4.8 °C, which is 1.1 °C above the 1981-2010 average. The UK overall received 155% of average rainfall making it the third wettest in the series. A broad region from east Devon to Kent and up to the central midlands received well in excess of 200 % and some more localised regions were closer to three times the average. Parts of eastern Scotland were also similarly wet, with in excess of twice the normal rainfall. The region of south east and central south England beat its January rainfall record by a large margin and was the equal-wettest calendar month for that region in a series from 1910. It was also the wettest January in the England and Wales precipitation series that is based on a much smaller network of rain gauges, but extends back to 1766, with January 1948 being the closest comparable to January 2014. It was not wet everywhere though and parts of northern Scotland were significantly drier than average. There was a general division in sunshine across the country; despite being so wet the south east of the UK was sunnier than average whereas the north-west was duller than average. The UK overall received 91% of average sunshine hours.

A maximum temperature of 14.1 °C was recorded at Bude (Cornwall) on the 5th. A minimum temperature of -7.5 °C was recorded at Preston Montford (Shropshire) on the 12th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 7th, 70.4 mm of rain fell at Cluanie Inn (Highland). A wind gust of 106 mph was recorded at Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight) on the 3rd. A snow-depth of 12 cm was measured at Kindrogan (Perthshire) at 0900 GMT on the 27th.

Weather impacts

The image below shows flooding on the Somerset Levels on 23 January 2014. Bridgwater and Taunton can be seen in the top-left and centre-left respectively; the M5 motorway is visible. Yeovil is at the bottom-right. Landsat-8 satellite image courtesy of NASA / USGS.



The month began as December had concluded, with another deep low situated to the west of the UK. From the 2nd to 3rd the low pressure, high winds and spring tides resulted in considerable disruption and widespread flooding and damage to properties and coastal infrastructure for many coastlines of Wales and the south west of England. Aberystwyth sea-front was badly damaged by the force of the storms over the New Year period. Approximately 1000 acres of agricultural land at Llanbedr (Gwynedd) regularly flooded through January after a section of the sea defences were breached, and the sea wall in Newquay was also badly damaged.

Heavy rain falling onto already saturated ground also resulted in flooding across parts of Wales, Scotland and western England. A number of rivers burst their banks including the river Towy in Carmarthen and the Severn at Minsterworth. Severe flooding in east Devon villages resulted in six people being rescued from cars. The bad weather also resulted in power cuts to parts of the south east and disruption to rail, road and ferries in some areas.

The Somerset levels were particularly badly affected by flooding throughout the month. A number of villages in Somerset and several hundred people were effectively cut off for most of the month and over 28,000 acres of land was flooded. Further heavy rain and towards the end of the month was especially unwelcome with some parts of south England receiving a further 50 to 100 mm.

England diary of highlights

The month was very unsettled, with a continuation of the run of deep Atlantic low pressure systems that defined the second half of December bringing further spells of very strong wind and heavy rain. Mid-month saw some brief sunny spells, but the rain continued with few dry days and some exceptionally high rainfall accumulations for southern areas. The westerly weather type resulted in another mild month with a notable absence of frosts.

Temperatures for the month overall were above normal, with the mean temperature 1.3 °C above the 1981-2010 average. It was an exceptionally wet month across the southern half of the country with a wide area receiving more than double normal January rainfall; some areas such as Oxfordshire and Surrey received closer to three times the average. At 193% of average rainfall it was the wettest January in England in the series from 1910. The south-east and central southern England area received 256% of average January rainfall, and here it was the equal-wettest calendar month in the series (with December 1914). However, despite the wet weather, sunshine totals were near average at 101%.

1st to 7th:

Although the 1st started fine for most, strong winds and rain spread from the west during the day, with over 30 mm of rainfall in Hampshire and a gust of 77 mph at Berry Head (Devon). The rain cleared overnight to leave a brighter day on the 2nd with showers, and windy with gusts up to 58 mph on southern coasts. Another area of rain arrived early on the 3rd, clearing north to leave scattered showers and strong winds with Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight) recording a gust of 106 mph. Winds eased on the 4th but there was rain over southern and eastern areas for much of the day. After a chilly start for eastern areas on the 5th, winds picked up and a band of rain spread into western areas during the afternoon. The 6th was windy, with scattered showers, heaviest in the west with thunder in the far south-west. A band of rain in central areas on the 7th cleared to the east, with further showers for central areas in the afternoon.

8th to 20th:

The 8th started bright, and winds eased, but another area of rain reached the south-west in late morning and spread north-east. The 9th was mainly dry and bright with some scattered, light showers in the north-west. The 10th started with scattered showers for the south coast, but a band of rain reached western areas in the afternoon and spread south-east. A ridge of high pressure gave a mainly dry and bright day on the 11th although a band of rain spread into western areas in late afternoon. After overnight rain cleared, the 12th saw a frosty start, with temperatures falling to -5 °C in parts of the Home Counties; it was mostly fine, although showers developed in western areas later. The 13th was bright in the east but rain spread into western and central areas during the afternoon. The 14th followed a similar pattern with a bright and dry morning, but a band of rain spread from the west in the afternoon. The 15th brought sunshine and showers, with a band of more persistent rain reaching the west by evening. A mainly bright day followed on the 16th with scattered showers for southern areas. Heavy showers affected the south-east during the morning of the 17th, with western areas seeing more scattered showers in the afternoon. It was a damp start on the 18th with patchy rain for many areas, although this cleared to the north in the afternoon, while a band of showers spread into the west later on. A band of rain over eastern areas on the morning of the 19th cleared to give a mainly dry and bright afternoon. It was a cold start on the 20th, with the temperature at Shawbury (Shropshire) falling to -4.2 °C, followed by a mainly dry and sunny day.

21st to 31st:

The 21st started fine, but a band of showers reached western areas and moved east during the afternoon. Rain cleared from the east during the morning of the 22nd to leave a bright afternoon, with scattered showers mainly in the north-west. A band of showers spread from the west during the morning of the 23rd, clearing in the afternoon. The 24th started with sunny spells for many, but rain into the west by late afternoon quickly spread eastwards. A dry morning on the 25th with sunny spells, but heavy showers and thunderstorms spread

from the north-west during the afternoon with the heaviest in central areas. Strong winds and rain spread from the west early on the 26th, clearing east to leave a scattering of afternoon showers, some wintry over high ground in the north. The 27th started with rain in eastern areas, clearing to leave sunshine and showers. Further sunshine on the 28th, with scattered showers, heaviest in central areas. The 29th was unsettled with showers for many, and a band of rain spread east across southern areas; it felt colder than of late with an easterly breeze. Central and eastern areas saw rain for much of the 30th with many other areas dry and bright. On the 31st rain and strong winds spread across the whole of the country, with gusts over 50 mph in the south-west and Charlwood (Surrey) recording 38 mm of rainfall.

Wales diary of highlights

The whole of January remained very unsettled with strong to gale-force winds particularly at the start of the month and some high rainfall totals. There were relatively few dry days through the month, and it was a dull but mild month.

The mean temperature was 1.2 °C above the 1981-2010 average. It was the fourth wettest January for Wales in a series from 1910 with 164% of average rainfall, and the wettest January since 1974. It was a dull month with sunshine amounts below average at 78%.

1st to 7th:

The 1st was mild and windy with gales at times. A band of rain moved through in the morning, with further heavy rain in the south-east later in the day; 42.6 mm was recorded at Tredegar (Gwent). Strong to gale-force winds continued into the 2nd with a 71 mph gust at Capel Curig (Gwynedd) and sunshine and showers. The 3rd was very windy with gales or severe gales and prolonged showers; 82 mph was recorded at Mumbles Head (West Glamorgan). It was a calmer day on the 4th with patchy rain or showers. Dull with rain from mid-morning on the 5th accompanied with strong winds. The 6th had heavy showers, prolonged at times, with gales and a highest gust of 79 mph at Capel Curig (Gwynedd). The 7th had periods of rain through the morning, then a narrow band of heavy rain passing from west to east in the afternoon.

8th to 20th:

It was dull on the 8th with rain moving in from the south-west to cover the whole of Wales in the afternoon and evening. Rain in the early hours of the 9th dissipated into sunshine and isolated showers. The 10th was cloudy, with rain in the afternoon and evening. It was dry and sunny on the 11th. The 12th was cloudy with rain from the west in the afternoon and evening. After some sunshine and just isolated showers, more persistent rain spread in from mid-afternoon on the 13th. The 14th started dry with some sunshine, before rain swept in from the south-west for the afternoon and evening. Some showery rain in the morning of the 15th, then a band of rain spread across later in the day. The 16th had showers, becoming more prolonged later in the day. It was a day of sunshine and showers on the 17th with the heaviest showers in the south. Widespread rain or drizzle in the morning of the 18th was replaced by heavy showers during the afternoon. The 19th was drier and brighter, with only a few showers in the south-west. The 20th was mainly bright, but with light showers in western areas.

21st to 31st:

The morning of the 21st was cloudy but mainly dry, but showers developed during the afternoon and became heavier later. The 22nd was generally cloudy inland with scattered, light showers. Scattered showers early on the 23rd cleared to leave a mainly dry and bright day. A bright start on the 24th but rain quickly spread in from the west during the morning. After a dry and bright start on the 25th, a band of heavy rain with thunderstorms developed during the afternoon and spread south-east. On the 26th a band of rain passed through from west to east in the morning, clearing to showers in the afternoon. Showers merged into longer spells of rain at times throughout the 27th. Rain in the early hours of the 28th turned showery through the day. The 29th had

showers, merging into longer spells of rain in the east. Dull, colder but mainly dry on the 30th. A band of heavy rain moved in from the west by mid-morning on the 31st, then showery later.

Scotland diary of highlights

The month continued the theme of unsettled weather, with rain and strong winds, reaching gale-force at times. Mid-month saw the winds drop, but the weather still remained unsettled for most, and high winds returned again at the end of the month. There were significant snowfalls across Scotland's mountains but any snow was very limited at lower levels.

Temperatures for the month overall were above normal, with the mean temperature 0.9 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Parts of eastern Scotland and the far south-west received more than double their average rainfall, but the far north-west was drier than average, resulting in an overall figure for Scotland of 123%. It was quite a dull month with only 70% of average sunshine.

1st to 7th:

The 1st was mainly dry at first but strong winds and rain spread from the south later. Scattered showers for most on the 2nd, but in the north it remained mainly dry. Rain spread to most areas on the 3rd before clearing to the east, with winds up to gale force and a gust of 72 mph being recorded at Edinburgh, Blackford Hill. Remaining unsettled on the 4th with rain or showers for most areas. A dry start for most on the 5th but rain accompanied by strong to gale-force winds spread across the country from the west. It was windy again on the 6th with rain for most areas, but drier in the north. The south and west were wet and blustery on the 7th but it was mainly dry in the north and east.

8th to 23rd:

It was mainly dry in the east on the 8th but the west saw blustery showers. Mostly dry and bright in the east on the 9th but more showery in the north and west. After a dry start on the 10th, rain spread to most areas from the west. The 11th was showery in the north and west, some places having particularly heavy showers with 63.2 mm recorded at Achnagart (Highland). It was mainly dry on the 12th but rain reached the west later. A dry start again on the 13th but rain pushed into the south-west and then across the whole country. Mostly dry and bright on the 14th apart from some showers in the north-east, but rain spread in from the west later. A wet start for most areas on the 15th and as the rain cleared to the east a further area of rain spread in from the west. Most of the country was dry on the 16th, with showers only in the south-west. Showers or longer spells of rain on the 17th were frequent, especially in the east. Rain in the south on the 18th moved slowly north through the day. Most areas were wet on the 19th, but the rain slowly cleared to the east. It was mainly dry and bright in the east on the 20th, but showery in the west. It was a wet day on the 21st as a band of rain spread slowly east across the country. Rain in the east on the 22nd moved away during the morning to leave a showery day for most areas. Much of the country had showers or longer spells of rain on the 23rd, with snow on higher ground, although some areas remained dry all day.

24th to 31st:

After a dry start for most on the 24th, strong winds and rain spread across the country later on. More strong winds and rain, heavy at times, spread across the country on the 25th. Another extensive area of rain, followed by showers, spread across the country from the west on the 26th turning to snow on high ground; it also felt very cold in the strong to gale-force winds with a max gust of 81 mph recorded at South Uist (Western Isles). Most areas were wet on the 27th with strong winds in the north as a weather system sat over the country. Another wet and breezy day on the 28th but it was drier and brighter in the west. Rain for most areas on the 29th with snow on higher ground, but becoming lighter and more patchy later in the day. It was mostly dry on the 30th apart from some patchy rain or showers in the east. More heavy rain and strong to gale-force winds swept across the country from the west on the 31st.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

The whole of January remained very unsettled, with strong to gale-force winds particularly at the start of the month and some heavy rain. Throughout the month there were relatively few dry days, and it was dull but mild.

The mean temperature was close to normal at 0.3 °C above the 1981-2010 average, although parts of the south-east were milder. It was a wet month with 149% of average rainfall, and a rather dull month with 85% of average sunshine hours.

1st to 7th:

After a bright start on the 1st, rain spread from the south in the afternoon. The 2nd was bright and breezy. Overnight rain and strong winds cleared during the morning of the 3rd to leave scattered showers in western areas. It was brighter on the 4th with showers for northern coastal areas. Rain and strong winds spread from the west during the morning of the 5th with Magilligan (County Londonderry) recording a gust of 67 mph. The rain cleared during the afternoon, leaving some heavy showers. The 6th saw blustery showers, most frequent in the west. The wind eased on the 7th and it was largely dry.

8th to 20th:

A band of rain pushed through in the early hours of the 8th, but a dry day followed with a good deal of sunshine. There was a touch of frost inland early on the 9th but again mainly dry and bright during the daytime. Rain spread eastwards during the morning of the 10th, clearing to leave a mainly dry afternoon. The 11th continued dry and sunny for most with just a few well-scattered showers. Mainly dry at first on 12th before rain, heavy at times, spread from the west, not clearing the east until late evening with 20.8 mm recorded at Banagher (County Londonderry). Another band of rain moved in quickly on the 13th but it was mainly dry by the afternoon. The 14th started dry but there was further rain in most places by early afternoon, heavy at times and persisting through until the morning of 15th when it became mainly dry for a time before another band of rain quickly moved across during the afternoon. There were frequent showers in most areas on the 16th, heaviest in the Belfast area. Showers died out during the morning of the 17th. The 18th was dull and wet in places, but drier in the west. There was some sunshine on the 19th, but showers, heaviest in the east; these died out early on the 20th to leave a fine sunny afternoon.

21st to 31st:

Bands of rain affected all areas on the 21st, most persistent and heavy along the east coast. Rain cleared before dawn on the 22nd to give a day of scattered showers. There were further bands of rain or showers overnight into the 23rd, becoming brighter and more showery through the day. Persistent rain affected all areas overnight, then cleared most places during the morning of the 24th. The 25th saw persistent heavy rain at first, and a strong westerly wind fed frequent showers through for the remainder of the day. There was further persistent rain overnight into 26th with strong to gale-force winds; showers continued through the day and a gust of 58 mph was recorded at Orlock Head (County Down). The 27th was dull, wet and windy generally, with 30.6 mm recorded ay Ballypatrick (County Antrim). Winds eased, turning more southerly, and there were periods of rain or showers throughout for the 28th and 29th. It was colder on 30th but mainly dry. Rain and strong winds covered most areas early on the 31st, but it became mainly dry by the afternoon.

Last updated: 7 July 2015